*Seven Side-Effects of Punishment:*

1. *Punishment merely teaches what NOT to do.* When used alone, punishment does not develop positive behaviors. If we wish to develop positive behaviors, we must use some form of reinforcement (discussed in detail in the previous chapter). Strategies for combining reinforcement and punishment into an integrated strategy are discussed later in this chapter.
2. *Punishment often causes avoidance behaviors.* The recipient of punishment is likely to avoid both (a) the person who administered the punishment, and (b) the situation in which the punishment was administered. Thus, in schools where the assistant principal is the one whose main job seems to be to administer swats to unruly students, students often avoid the assistant principal. Since parents and teachers (and even assistant principals) are interested in teaching children appropriate behaviors, they make their job considerably more difficult if they must first make the children stop avoiding them before they can initiate positive contacts. Likewise, if children are frightened of school or of staying around the house out of fear of being punished, it will be difficult to help them develop adaptive skills. In addition, the other way out strategies discussed on page xxx of Chapter 10 arise from the desire to avoid punishment.
3. *Punishment often results in a mere suppression of the undesirable behavior.* The punished person discovers that it is advisable to stop doing whatever incurred the punishment, but that the same behavior can be tried again as soon as the punishment becomes less probable. Since punishment merely teaches what not to do and suggests avoidance strategies, the punished person may merely cease the designated behavior until it appears that the aversive situation has been successfully avoided, or until a time when the pleasant results outweigh the aversive results.
4. *Punishment often results in a sort of behavioral constriction.* The person who is punished may discover that the safest way to avoid punishment in the future is to avoid doing anything that even remotely resembles the punished action. (Note that this problem is related to the problems of attributions for failure and learned helplessness, which were discussed in Chapter 5.)  
     
   A notorious instance of such overgeneralized punishment is cited by educators who maintain that school systematically eliminates creativity in children. Being informed that they are wrong is viewed as at least mildly aversive by most children and adults, just as being informed that they are right is at least mildly reinforcing. When children give wrong answers and are told they are wrong, they are likely to attempt to stop the behavior which leads to being told they are wrong. However, many of them feel that they are being punished for "giving it a try" or for offering a hypothesis, rather than for a misuse of a cognitive process or a simple mistake in memory. This is especially likely to be true if the punishment is severe (e.g., being called wrong in front of all their peers). When this punishment happens, children can avoid being called wrong in the future by simply not volunteering and not trying very hard. (It is less aversive to be called wrong if you have not even tried than if you have given your best efforts only to fail.)  
     
   Likewise, some educators and critics of education contend that children approach our schools with a great deal of eagerness and creativity, and then as they go through school they are punished and told what not to do so often that they lose their spontaneity and become apathetic. The problem is one of overgeneralization; the child learns not only to avoid the specific undesirable behavior but also to avoid a large number of neutral or desirable behaviors.
5. *Punishment often results in undesirable modeling.* If a child perceives that adults solve most of their problems by employing punishment, that child is likely to resort to punishment to solve his or her own problems. This vicarious learning (discussed in Chapter 10) becomes an especially serious problem when adults use such overtly aggressive tactics as spanking, hitting, and verbal attacks as their punishment techniques. In such cases adults should not be surprised when children engage in socially undesirable behaviors such as hitting other children when these others annoy them. The fact that the parents feel that they are "right" in administering their punishment, whereas the children are "wrong," is of little relevance. What a child perceives is: "Mom and Dad solve their problems by hitting. I have a problem now. So I should hit the person who is responsible for my problem."
6. *Punishment often leads to retaliatory behavior.* A person who has been frustrated through punishment is likely to be upset. Depending on the person's level of maturity and the degree to which the person holds the punisher responsible for the aversiveness of the situation, the recipient of punishment is likely to want to get even. Many children "declare war" in this way and nurse their need for revenge for remarkably long periods of time.
7. *Punishment often leads to negative self evaluations.* A person's self concept (discussed in Chapter 8) is based on the person's self-evaluations; and these evaluations are derived, in large part, from significant others in the person's environment. A person who is constantly the recipient of punishment is likely to form a negative self concept, and to develop perceptions of low self-efficacy and learned helplessness (discussed in Chapter 5). Learners who perceive themselves as incompetent are likely to either avoid undertaking activities out of a fear of failure or to engage in undesirable activities which are related to their negative self evaluation.

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